1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1

wielded by the Shi'i mujtahids—doctors of the law—was formidable not only in 'Iraq but throughout Persia, where their word was always important, sometimes decisive, in the highest decisions of State. These divines, nearly all Persian by nationality, with their considerable wealth, their adulation by the simple, their concourse of pupils and followers—the more, since theological students were exempt from conscription—formed the nucleus of an unassimilable element in 'Iraq society and politics: anti-Sunni, anti-Turkish, anti-progressive, all-powerful over the Euphrates tribes, they could be neither placated nor ignored. Meanwhile the violent local politics of these towns were controlled by 'town Shaykhs' by no means holy, and by street gangs among which the famous Zugurd and Shumurd of Najf were notorious.

Although no region or social stratum in the territory was without its acquaintance with religion, its civilized and traditional social observances, and its lively imitative intelligence, yet manifestations of an intellectual or cultural life were rare. The general level of information regarding the world, past or present, and that of æsthetic appreciation, was low even among the literate classes of the towns; in the tribes, ignorance was profound. The arts were represented by a narrow range of traditional music, a few remembered Arab songs, the modern verses of two or three respected poets, geometrical decoration in brickwork, and the humblest of handicrafts. Disinterested learning could be found in rare scholars of the minority communities (such as Father Anastase the Carmelite), and among members of the upper-class families—Basha'yans, Alusis, Gaylanis, 'Umaris—who maintained domestic libraries and composed histories of their town or family. Of publishing, book production, or generally readable literary output there was nothing save the dull official newspaper. Archaeological excavation, 'Iraq's greatest claim to learned interest at the time, was to 'Iraqis an ignored or suspect mystery. The professional classes—lawyers, doctors, military officers—had acquired from Turkish sources a modicum of specialized knowledge reaching no standard admissible in Europe; in other branches of applied knowledge—agriculture, engineering, economics—there was nothing or almost nothing to show. Theology and ecclesiastical history stood in a class apart; in the Sunni 'religious' families it represented a body of authentic learning, in a field limited by its narrow tradition and the rejection of originality; in Shi'ism, and above all at the Holy Cities, these studies were synonymous with learning itself (since no others existed) and almost with virtue. Pursued for a lifetime of memorizing and arid pedantry, and attracting hundreds of pale disciples destined for lives of sheltered and endowed religion, this medieval learning of Shi'i dogma and tradition formed the

1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1

stock-in-trade and monopoly of the Shi'i 'alim and mujtahid, who claimed on this basis to lead tribe and town in all secular affairs.

5. 'IRAQ SOCIETY: THE TRIBES

If elements of comparative social progress were to be found in the towns, how far did the great majority of the inhabitants outside still live in a world remote from change?—a world in which a particular range of inherited ideas, repugnances and loyalties obtained: where the manners and restrictions of urban life were unknown: where social observances, marriage and kinship, and the settlement of feuds had their traditional rules, unknown to Turkish law, and the desert virtues of hospitality and gallantry had their own interpretation. This detached specialized world surrounded, on every hand, the towns and greater villages of 'Iraq, dominated all communications, held nine-tenths of the cultivated land. The tribes, homogeneous in code and outlook and each the focus of intense loyalties, differed among themselves in important respects. Of the Arab tribes, roughly half were Sunni, half Shi'i; some, notably the Muntafiq confederation, were Shi'i with a Sunni ruling family; others contained sections of both the faiths. In Kurdistan Shi'i tribes were rare and, in places, suspected of deeper heresy. Such difference of religious allegiance was reflected in the extent to which the Shi'i tribes could be influenced by the mujtahids, and in the Sunni respect for the person of the Caliph. To the statesmen of Turkey the Shi'i sympathies of half 'Iraq were an offence and embarrassment.

The environment of the tribe affected not only its economics but its mode of life. The Kurdish nomads moved among settled folk; the desert Arabs abode in their own empty isolated world, from which arose their mental remoteness, their inaccessibility to Government forces, but also their vulnerability through dependence on the markets of the desert fringes. Such were the Dhafir of south-western 'Iraq, the 'Aniza of the Shamiya steppe, the Shammar of the upper Jazira, and smaller groups within 'Iraq. The environment of the settled cultivating tribes varied according to the irrigation method whereby they cultivated, and by the nature of their crops: the fruit or tobacco grower of Kurdistan, the wheat and vegetable grower of Samarrā were different enough from the date gardener of Ba'quba or the Shamiya, or the rice-field workers of the Albu Muḥammad or the Fatla. These folk were 'ignoble' in the eyes of the 'noble', feckless, starving aristocracy of the desert. Of the tribes of every type, the origins were at least as various as their environments, but less easy to formulate. In them all, the vital unifying and loyalty-evoking element was the name itself, and the complex of shared traditions for which it stood; but the how